



CLARK COUNTY HOUSING OPTIONS STUDY AND ACTION PLAN

Project Advisory Group Meeting #8

October 26, 2021 – 3PM to 5PM

SUMMARY

PAG Members: Stephan Abramson, Ron Barca, Sierk Braam, Kate Budd, Victor Caesar, Yolanda Frazier, Mark Maggiora, Christina Marneris, Martha Maier, Julie Olson, Heidi Rosenberg, Eric Scott, Bryan Snodgrass, Dan Whiteley, Phil Wuest.

County Staff: Susan Ellinger, Jacqui Kamp, Jenna Kay

Consultants: Steve Faust (3J Consulting), Elizabeth Decker (JET Planning)

Welcome

Steve Faust welcomed PAG members and guests to the eighth PAG meeting and reviewed the agenda. The main purpose of today's meeting is for PAG members to review and comment on draft priority strategies.

Announcements

Jacqui Kamp introduced a new PAG member to represent communities of color. Carol Collier needed to step down so we are fortunate to have Yolanda Frazier from the NAACP take her position and be an advocate for communities of color. Welcome Yolanda.

Ron Barca announced that he has become an employee of Wolf Industries, the maker of tiny homes where some PAG members toured previously. Ron is not representing them, but wants to make sure it is public knowledge.

Housing Action Plan: Priority Strategies

Steve also reviewed the project process since June 2021 and the schedule going forward. The strategies that emerge from this meeting will be shared with the public as draft PAG recommendations. Since the PAG last met, County staff and the consultant team organized strategies into tiers. The first tier consists of strategies that the intended project outcome of "implementation-ready/actionable strategies and recommendations for public, Planning Commission and Council consideration using the information gathered in the project." The second tier includes strategies supported by the PAG that require more study or a longer timeline for implementation. A third tier includes strategies that are not a high priority, but the County should consider longer-term. Other



potential strategies discussed over the summer were either moved to a list of actions the County is already taking or were removed from consideration.

Within these tiers, there are several categories of strategies. Code Changes center on updates to the County's development code that expand housing development options and enhance residential development feasibility of existing housing options. Development code updates primarily apply to private development as individual projects are proposed. While code updates do not mandate that certain housing types are built, they expand opportunities and enhance development feasibility of a wider range of residential dwelling types to support a broader range of private development proposals. Select code updates also support development of regulated affordable housing, either indirectly by reducing barriers for all residential development or directly through targeted code amendments.

Affordable Housing strategies are intended to increase the feasibility of subsidized affordable housing for low, very low, and extremely low-income households. Many of the recommended code changes also directly support affordable housing, such as reduced parking requirements, revisions to Highway 99 design standards, and permitting residential uses in commercial zones for regulated affordable housing development.

Programs and Partnerships are strategies where the County role is to administer or support partner efforts to facilitate educational and/or financial assistance programs.

Advocacy strategies are those where County Council should continue to advocate for state legislative changes to allow strategies and tools not currently available to the County.

Steve reminded PAG members that the group will be using a consensus-based decision-making process whereby representatives seek to reach agreement on a mutually acceptable course of action. Decisions are made by agreement rather than by majority vote where representatives agree to support, accept, live with, or agree not to oppose the decision.

Presentation

Before Elizabeth and Steve presented the priority strategies, a series of questions were posed for PAG consideration:

- Are there any details within the strategies that you would recommend revising? If so, how?
 - Questions for specific strategies: A-1.1.2; A-5.1; A-7.1; B-1.6.1
- Would you recommend reprioritizing any strategies to a different tier?
- Are there any strategies that have been removed that should be added back in?
- Are there any strategies that should be added that have not yet been reviewed or discussed?

Discussion

The following is a summary of PAG comments on the priority strategies (staff/consultant comment are shown in *italics*):

- You have put a lot of work into this and there is a lot of new information here. One short discussion and no meeting until January does not do justice to the effort we've put in to date. I don't think there is adequate time to discuss all of these.

- *It is true that there is not adequate time to discuss all of these today. We did spend three months reviewing each of these strategies in one form or another. It is true that additional details have been added over the past month. We are relying on the group to tell us which strategies they would like to talk about today. We will then take them out to the public over the next two months and review those comments and the strategies again in January. That doesn't preclude any other conversations or comments that people want to make over the next few months.*

A-1.1.1

- I'm supportive of this strategy, but don't think you can accomplish the goal without a corresponding increase in lot coverage.
- *Appreciate that prompt to take another look at that issue.*

A-1.1.2

- This strategy is targeting single family detached dwellings and is distinct but hopefully consistent with the proposal related to townhouses.
- Like the idea of all of these zoning proposals have the opportunity to go with smaller lot sizes in them if they can show the proportionality of it and not turn them into edge-by-edge townhouses.
- Need to be bold in our description of what we want to accomplish because we will likely be moved back to the middle. Want to see increase in density and affordable homeownership.

A-5.1.1

- I really like this one and think it should continue to be a priority. Adding flexibility for triplexes, quadplexes and townhouses is a really good idea. These housing types are not represented in our urban area in the county. If done right, I think Council could get behind it.

A-7.1

- I would lean towards keeping this strictly for affordable housing.
- This is done in Vancouver as an incentive for affordable housing over market rate housing.
- Something to consider regarding County Council discussions. It has been our position that we want to save commercial land for commercial development and not put residential development on it. Take that into consideration. We value commercial land and the ability to provide jobs and have not historically done a good job of protecting large parcels.
- City did change commercial code to allow affordable housing without a commercial requirement. It was a specific change to the commercial code as opposed to rezoning parcels for multifamily. If this is allowed for market rate housing, it somewhat defeats the purpose. In the city, there is so much competition for land that affordable housing can't compete on a land cost basis. Well-zoned and cited commercial land, still carries land costs that are not appropriate for affordable housing, so the market dictates that affordable housing developers are looking at tier 2, 2nd rate land that probably should have been residential in the first place. Think about this as the lot that is one or two lots off of the main thoroughfare and doesn't have high retail demand.
- This would be commercial land that people don't want to develop commercially.
- I support the policy and in terms of limiting the potential land where this could go, the city requires it to be near transit. There are other ways you could do it. Limiting it to affordable

housing means there are a limited number of parties who may pursue it as opposed to many market rate developers. The city adopted the policy a few years ago and has only seen a few applications.

- *Hearing support for limiting this to affordable housing, but there may be some work needed to add more details about implementation.*
- When land is zoned commercial, versus affordable residential, is there any way for that land to be deemed appropriate for affordable housing, but with some commercial land use? Could some of commercial land help in job creation?
- *The idea is that many affordable housing developers do affordable housing well, but do not do commercial development well. Therefore, removing the commercial aspect is a benefit to those developers.*
- *There could be a benefit to citing affordable housing in a commercial area, because there is access to jobs and transit in the surrounding commercial area.*
- Many grant funds for affordable housing don't allow for a commercial use.

B-1.6.1

- I doubt the Council will approve anything more restrictive than what state law requires. Parking is a touchy subject. We should be careful when talking about parking and reducing parking and taking away parking. It has a real impact on livability and is very emotional.
- I agree with Councilor Olson. For this County going forward, HB 2343 is a leap as far as we would have gotten under any circumstance anyway. I am more interested in how to look at the duplex, triplex, and quadplex situation. Or the idea of smaller lot size development and think about what is livable under those circumstances. We have to take this in bites based on the style of dwellings. In multifamily, the house bill gives us a roadmap to accept at the moment and tackle others without clear guidance.
- We are missing out on a rich opportunity to qualify this stuff. B-1.6.1 is a good example of an issue that we could have a team of folks sit down for a few hours and come up with excellent element to bring forward. It is problematic to have all of this energy generated and staff has done tremendous work here, but we are losing opportunity for the PAG to weigh in and flush these out in a deeper sense. Over the 10-week window between now and January, I would like to see a more informal gathering based on particular groupings and focus on different strategies. That would have to be facilitated.
- Not opposed to this, but weekend C-Tran bus service drops off below what is needed. We need some flexibility to show we can get a reduction in parking, possibly by going to staff or Councilors to get a waiver.
- I like the idea of focus groups: parking, small lot subdivision, zoning changes. We are starting to get coalesced about needing to see some breakthroughs on specific and targeted items to bring back and I am available for it.
- We can't count on C-Tran budgets to tell us how much asphalt we put down.

Other Comments

- B 1.1 and B 1.2 could be blended together into a product that enhances the development opportunity and gets us the requirements of where we need to be. Tandem parking is brilliant in that regard, and the idea of allowances for some on street parking could have some fence posts put around it so people understand what that means and where it's appropriate.

- The location of small commercial areas in residentially zoned areas. B-2.3 hasn't gotten enough attention. It should be moved up in the priority discussion. We do have a mandate to become less vehicle dependent and to put small commercial developments in residentially zoned areas. That allows residents, and especially older residents, to walk to a local store and be less dependent on buses. It also goes part way to achieving Councilor Olson's objective of not losing employment opportunities in these areas.
- Sounds like difference between Tier 1, 2, and 3 is not just emphasis but time. Consider having a labeling that reflects that so it doesn't seem that they are tiered in terms of importance.
- A-1.5: creation of small lot zone, R1-2.5, should be reconsidered. That is a transparent way of introducing the concept of density. It has to be mapped and approved and go through a process. Some of the other strategies are good ideas but might be perceived as a work around. Confusing if you allow 8,000 sf lots in a zone where the label says 10,000 sf lots.
- A-6.1 offering density bonuses and height bonuses in some cases based on the residents served can get at a more targeted approach. It would be interesting to take this strategy to the public and should be part of a comprehensive strategy.
- B-6.2 to revisit County road standards should be on the list.
- Reconsider when an application is submitted for multifamily development for pricing and cost, ask applicants what is the projected price points that the units are intended to come in as.
- One strategy looks at monitoring and should also emphasize multifamily housing and rents.
- *We chose to remove the smaller R-1.5 zone and move forward with reducing minimum lot sizes in existing zones and offering options for middle housing that reduce the amount of lot area per unit as well as the compact subdivision option. Those seemed like the strategies that got more positive feedback and seemed more politically viable. We could look at developing that R-1.5 zone as a Tier 2 strategy.*
- I think by creating a zone like that we run the risk of exclusionary zoning rather than spreading across existing zones, which is ultimately more fair and long term more healthy rather than having separate zones for what will likely be low-income housing.
- Make sure we have definitions well thought out on what is affordable. Have to have ability to measure where we are at, understand where we are for a baseline, otherwise won't be able to validate results afterwards. Saw portions of it, trying to get through packet again, e.g., 80% AMI, \$73,000, 2 people working full time puts HH at \$60k. What are we trying to get at? What is cost burdened for sheltering? Try and put that stuff in words that we can measure for the future. Started off saying over 80% SF dwelling in our zoning and not really going to be better unless we can see it's going to get better.
- We have to make sure that we have our definitions well thought out on 'affordable.' We have to be able to measure where we are at and if we get improvement from the changes we propose. We need a baseline to validate our results afterwards. 80% AMI can have different definitions depending on who you are working with. Be clear about what is cost burdened. For shelter, is it 30% of net or gross income? Put it in words to measure for the future.
- *Definitions in the zoning code itself will be part of the work. For some strategies we need to make updates to comply with state regulations that call out 80% AMI or 60% AMI.*
- One policy Vancouver has that may be worth considering is we amended the criteria for rezones to include, among a list of considerations, if the proposed rezone furthers affordable housing (generally). Rezone proposals can point to a policy on the books when housing for less than market rate is being proposed.

- I'm concerned about the RV and tiny house description. If I look at it the way we have RV parks today versus mobile home parks, what they have in common is that you have to rent a piece of dirt, usually on a monthly basis, and there is little control over the cost. Have a deep concern about the model. People and their dwellings come in at lowest tier of cost and that is the shelter over their head, but the inability to control the cost of dirt has proved to be people's undoing. I like the concept, but am concerned about calling it an affordable housing strategy without a way to target the people in a cost structure of some sort. From a tier 1 standpoint it makes sense, but I do have a concern that we are not controlling it in a fashion to get the outcome we think we are getting.
- *Point is well taken that the financial models in manufactured home parks are not predicated on maximizing affordability for residents. The strategy does not get at fundamental issues. The tier 2 strategy has more flexibility to look at different ways to site individual RVs and tiny homes by having options outside of these parks to achieve more stability and affordability.*

Public Comment

- Pleasure to listen to this conversation especially the affordability issue and what it's called / what it stands for. We don't want to introduce a multifamily tax exemption into the system just to introduce market rate housing. A lot of this is getting toward infill. I'd like to see some flexibility in the lot sizes and parking requirements to be an average versus a bare minimum. I think that would create some flexibility toward keeping existing structures rather than having to demolish them. You might have a small house on a 2,000 sf lot with no parking and a larger lot with a house and several parking spaces to bring the average back into play. Also, I noticed that impact fee waivers were being considered, but I would caution that if we go that route that those accounts be backfilled or we won't have the funding we need for parks or whatever we are funding. The discussion of affordable housing and reducing parking, one thing to consider is that, especially in our unincorporated areas, cars are a huge ticket out of poverty. If we are putting people who are struggling into areas where they don't have the ability to have a car which would be there ticket out of it, we are preventing them from bettering their lives.
- Zoning and density have been a huge part of the conversation here. The Building Industry Association of Clark County is fully supportive of creating denser housing, specifically the compact subdivision idea. Affordability is outlined in HB 1923 that governs this process. I hope everyone received my letter regarding strategies that can be done in the short term: modifying the PUD ordinance; lessening open space requirements for cottage housing; increasing lot coverage to take advantage of smaller minimum lot sizes; backfilling impact fees. Maybe 80% reduction for affordable housing and 40% for smaller units.

Next Steps

Next steps are to take the draft recommendations out to the public through a public meeting and online questionnaire, targeted outreach to underserved communities and specific interest groups, another meeting with the Planning Commission and County Council. Next PAG meeting will be on January 25th. Per comments from some PAG members, we will see if there is a way that we can have some additional small group conversations before the next full meeting. Thank to everyone for their time and attention. Please send us any additional comments you have about these strategies.

Adjourn. Jacqui adjourned the meeting at 4:50pm.